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APPENDIX
T O A
GENTLEMAN's
RELIGION:

In which it is Proved,

That nothing contrary to
our Reason, can possibly be
the Object of our Belief ;
But that it is no just Excep-
tion against some of the Do-
ctrines of Christianity, that
they are above our Reason.

L O N D O N :

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Gentleman's Religion.

I. **H**OW those Persons who take unto themselves the distinguishing Name of *Unitarians*, do dissent from the main Body of *Christians*, of whatsoever Church or Perswasion, touching the Doctrines of the Trinity, and the Incarnation of our Saviour Christ, is so well known, that I need not here offer to open or explain the Terms of the Controversie which is managed between them. Now when in this Dispute the *Unitarians* are prest with some passages of Scripture, which seem very evidently to make against them,

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besides other ways which they have to avoid the force of them, they commonly have recourse to the nature of the thing controverted; and press their Adversaries back again with this demand, How such a thing can possibly be? And when to this it is reply'd, That there is evidently no Contradiction to sound Reason in the Doctrines themselves, and that the Truth of them ought to be believed upon the Authority of God, who hath revealed them: But that the manner of them is utterly above, and altogether incomprehensible to our finite and narrow Understandings, and therefore not to be enquired after. In return to this, there are some who maintain, that if these Doctrines were not contrary to Reason, yet this alone is a sufficient cause to reject them, that they are confessedly above it. For of that which is above our Reason (say they) we can form no true Conception, or Idea; and it is absurd, or rather impossible for a Man to believe, that which he cannot clearly and plainly so much as conceive or apprehend.

2. For the right stating and clearing of this whole Controversie, I have given

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ven such hints in the *Gentleman's Religion*, Part 1. Sect. 33. and Part 2. Sect. 2. 22, 23, 37. as I thought to be most fit for Men of ordinary Capacity, and most suitable to that brevity which I all along designed. But in this Appendix, I shall address my self unto those, who are of a more refined Understanding, and accustomed to a more exact way of thinking ; and try if I can give them any satisfaction in a Matter, which seems to be not a little perplexed, perhaps by the overmuch Curiosity of some of both the contending Parties.

3. That our Knowledge of things is but short and imperfect, is confessed on all sides. It is also very evident, that no Language whatsoever will afford us variety of Words sufficient to express all the Diversities and Peculiarities of our Thoughts, so as to secure them from the Mistakes of Ignorance, or Misapprehension, and the Cavils of Perverseness ; but that after all our Care, our most cautious Expressions will sometimes be liable to be misinterpreted to a contrary, or at least, wrested to a different meaning, from what we intended, And therefore the most

Acute and Judicious Writer will probably find himself much mistaken, if he at any time hopes so to handle any Controversie as to satisfy every Man. But since, upon the strictest Examination which I have been able to make, I am my self fully convinced of the Truth of what I have concluded in this Dispute, I will now (with God's Assistance) try, whether I can express my Thoughts with so much clearness, and prove them with such sufficient Arguments, and pertinent Instances, as may give some Satisfaction to others also : And that I may the more effectually do this, I shall endeavour to proceed as near as I can in such a Method, as is always used in Mathematical Demonstrations.

4. This word *Doctrine* is but another Term for a *Proposition*; and what a *Proposition* is, or when it is said to be true or false, certain, probable, or doubtful, I need not spend time to explain.

5. *Reason* is that faculty in Man (for I meddle not with the Knowledge of Angels) whereby he apprehends things, and their Attributes or Properties ; and frames a Judgment concerning what he apprehends. And also from those Judgments

ments which he makes, draws sometimes more immediate, or more remote and distant Consequences.

6. The Truth of some Propositions is so very plain, that as no Man in his Senses can deny them, so is it impossible to find out any thing which is more plain whereby to prove them. And such Propositions as these I call *self-evident*: Such for Example are, That *all the parts of a thing taken together are equal to the whole*. That *both parts of a Contradiction cannot be true at the same time*; and the like.

7. When the Truth of a Proposition does not immediately appear by its own light, but yet the Proposition can, beyond question, be proved from other Propositions which are self-evident; such a Proposition as this I term to be *built upon Reason alone*. Such for instance are, That *two Triangles, having equal bases, and being contained between the same parallel Lines, are equal*; and all other Propositions which are capable of being demonstrated, or clearly proved from the bare Principles of Reason.

8. Where the possibility of a Proposition (*i. e.* that it implies no Contradiction)

diction) can be evidently proved from the Principles of Reason alone, but yet the actual Truth and Reality of it cannot the same way be made appear, such a Proposition as this I call *reconcilable to Reason*. Thus for Example; That an Oak should grow up to its full and usual Stature, in an hour, is as possible (that is to say, as free from Contradiction) as that it should do the same in an hundred years ; (for all growth is motion, and the swiftness of motion may be for ever increased) but that ever this was actually so, cannot be proved by any Arguments drawn from Reason.

9. Where any Proposition (either immediately in it self, or mediately in its Consequences) does plainly contradict any other Proposition which is either self-evident, or built upon Reason, such a Proposition as this I term to be *contrary to Reason*; such for Example is this Proposition, That the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to three right Angles, and such like.

10. Where a Proposition is in it self true, but we are unable clearly to apprehend or frame a Notion or Conception of the things contained under the
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terms of it, such a Proposition I term to be *above Reason*. And a Proposition may be either wholly and altogether above our Reason, when we can frame no manner of Conception of the things spoken of, or else but partly above it, when some Notions of the things we have, but those very obscure and imperfect. Thus the Doctrine of Light and Colours, is wholly above the Reason of a Man born blind, who can frame no manner of Notion of these things from the Description which others make of them, because he is altogether destitute of proper Organs to receive any Impression from the things themselves. But the same Doctrine would not be so much above the Reason of a Man, who had some faint and confused glimmering of Sight; tho' still much more above his Reason than it would be if he were endowed with the faculty of clear and distinct Sight, as other Men commonly are.

11. To *know*, is to give assent to a Proposition when it evidently appears to be built upon Reason. But when the Truth of a Proposition is assented to, not upon Arguments drawn from the Reason, or the Nature of the thing,
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but upon account of the Veracity, and Authority of the Person or Persons who affirm it ; such a Proposition as that is said to be *believed*. Furthermore, If a Man understands not the meaning of a Proposition, and yet believes that it contains a Truth in it, because of the deference he pays to the Person who speaks it ; this I call an *implicit belief*: And properly speaking, the Object of such a belief is not the Truth of the Proposition it self, but only the Veracity of the Speaker. But where a Man understands the meaning of the Proposition which he believes, this I call an *Explicit Belief*.

12. No Man can possibly believe or give his Assent to any Doctrine or Proposition which appears to him to be contrary to Reason, (see Sect. 9.) For to own a Proposition to be self-evident, or built upon Reason, and yet at the same time to believe another which mediately, or immediately, is contradictory to it, is absolutely impossible.

13. If a Proposition be reconcilable to Reason, (Sect. 8.) and the Truth of it also testified by such Persons whose Veracity is beyond all doubt, or exception; such a Proposition cannot but be believed by any
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one unto whom it comes so testified. For if it be reconcilable to Reason, then it may possibly be true ; (*Sect. 8.*) and if I am actually convinced of the Veracity of the Person or Persons, who relate it, I cannot choose but believe that it is True. From whence I think it evidently follows, that Revelation, or the Testimony of another, may justly be looked upon, not only as *a means of Information*, but also as *a motive of Persuasion*, whatever a late Author says to the contrary.

14. But that which is most material in this present Controversie, is what I am now going to make appear, *viz.* That a Man may have most sufficient, and cogent Arguments, to give his Assent to such Propositions as are not only in part, but wholly, and altogether above his Reason. (*Sect. 10.*) For the clear and plain evincing of which, I shall crave leave to make a Relation of a Conference which once I had with a blind Man ; to whom, when I understood that he had been quite blind from his Infancy, and never could remember to have seen the least glimmering of Light, I had the Curiosity to put several questions. I asked him first of all, Whether ever he

he had endeavoured to frame any Notion or Conception, of Light or Colours, of which I suppose he had often heard mention to be made in common Discourse? To which he answered me, That he had often endeavoured it with the greatest Application of his Mind that possibly he could. And to that end and purpose he had made it his Business to ask all the questions he could think of, whereby to get Information, but all to no purpose; for that he was still altogether as ignorant of the Nature of Light and Colours, and as unable to frame any Conception of them, as if he had never before heard the Names of them. He told me moreover, that he was a long time before he would, or could believe, that other Men had any faculty at all which he wanted. For, says he, I was sensible of no Defect or Imperfection in my self, but believed my self to be altogether as perfect as all other Men with whom I conversed; and therefore when they told me that I was Blind, and talked to me of Light and Colours, I apprehended for a great while, that they did it only to impose upon me. But are you now convinced, said I, that

that you are blind ; and that other Men have the faculty of Sight, which you want ? Yes, replied he, I am fully satisfied and convinced of it. How can that be, said I, when you can frame no manner of Notion of Light or Colours, which are the Objects of Sight ? Thus answered he, I was convinced of it : They would put me at a distance from them, and yet would tell me every thing that I did ; as whether I stood, or sat, or held up my Hand, or let it down, or the like : Whereas I could not discover any thing which they did, except I were close to them, and felt them carefully with my Hands. Now by this, continued he, I am fully convinced, that other Men have a faculty which I want, whereby they can discover and distinguish things at a distance, which they call *Sight* : And I am told by all Men, that there is something called *Light*, which is diffused through the Air, and is the Instrument whereby they are enabled to exercise this faculty ; and also that the *Colour* and *Shape* of things are the Objects upon which the same is employed. But although I can by my touch distinguish between the different

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shapes of some things, and so can frame a Notion of *Shape*: Yet what *Light* is, or what *Colours* are, I have not the least Conception; although I am, as I have told you, sufficiently convinced, that some such things there are. Now this Relation being (for the substance of it) true; to my own Knowledge, or at least (as every Man will own it to be) possible and rational; it will evidently follow, without any farther proof, that this Man had very good and unquestionable grounds to believe some things, that were altogether above his Reason; for what Sight, Light, or Colours were, he was utterly incapable of framing, or receiving, any Idea. But yet that there were such things, and that all he heard Men discourse about them was not meer Fiction, (as he for some time apprehended) was plainly proved to him by such Arguments as every reasonable Man must allow to have been abundantly sufficient to move his Assent. Nor was this Assent of his which he gave unto these things, a bare implicit Belief; (*Seet. 11.*) as if he had been told that something did Exist, which was called *Blictri*; but was altogether igno-

ignorant of what was signified by that word, (as Mr. *Toland* speaks.) For although it was absolutely impossible for him to frame any direct Notion, or Conception, of the things themselves, yet by those analogous Representations which were made to him of them, he well might be, and was accordingly, not only fully convinced, that what was spoken concerning them, was not insignificant Nonsense; but also enabled to frame some sort of representative Conception of them, which is more than a Man can do of *Bliſtri*; of which he hears only the sound, but knows not the Signification. For, supposing a Man at the very time of his Birth, to be utterly deprived of his Organs of Sight; yet, by the use of his other four Senses, he may well conceive what a faculty of Sensation is; and how a sensible quality, or the small Particles of Matter flowing, or rebounding from a Body, and striking upon the proper Organ of Sense, do make such a peculiar Impression upon it, as to affect our Understanding with some particular Knowledge of the Body itself, whereby we are enabled to distinguish it from other Bodies. And as

he can directly apply all this to the Senses of Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching, of which he may be as good, or a better Master than other Men: So, by way of Analogy from these Senses, he will be able to make some imperfect sort of Representation to himself, what sort of thing Sight is; and what Light, and Colours are; though directly, and particularly, he knows no more of them, than if he had never heard of them. Sir *Kenelm Digby*, in his *Treatise of Bodies*, Chap. 28. tells us of a *Spanish Noble Man*, who was born so absolutely deaf, that if a Gun were shot off close by his Ear, he could not hear it; and yet was taught to speak very distinctly; and, by the motion of any Mans Mouth, so perfectly to understand what he said, as that he would not lose a word in a whole days Conversation. Now the Doctrine of Sounds and Musick must of Necessity have been as much above this Mans Reason, as that of Light and Colours, was above the blind Mans, of whom I but now spoke; and yet there might very good Assurance have been given to the one, that there was such a Sense as Hear-

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ing, and such a thing as a Sound, as well as there was unto the other, in the case of Light and Colours.

15. And now to apply what has been said, to the Controversie concerning the Trinity, and Incarnation of our Saviour. And here the Issue which I am now trying, presupposes these three things : First, That the Texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove the Truth of these Doctrines, are sufficient for the purpose for which they are alledged, if we interpret them according to the natural Order, and usual signification of the Words and Expressions of them. Secondly, That the Doctrines themselves are not contrary to Reason, as not implying any Contradiction; see *Part 2. Sect. 22.* But Thirdly, That they are altogether above our Reason, because we cannot frame any Notion or Idea of that particular Union, and Distinction, which is between the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, or between the two Natures which are in our Lord Jesus Christ: Which three things being taken for granted, the question that is to be determined, is, Whether or no it be a sufficient ground for a Man to deny his

Assent to the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation of Christ, because they are above his Reason?

16. And here, in the first place, it is very plain, That although we cannot by any means comprehend the things themselves, yet we do so far understand the meaning of the Terms in which these Doctrines are expressed, as clearly to perceive that they are not a company of insignificant Words put together, to make a sound, and signify nothing. What a *Person* is, we know; though we cannot tell what sort of Persons the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are; and how their Personal Distinction between themselves, particularly and fully differs from that of Men, one from another. What it is to be *One*, we well understand, although we cannot frame an Idea of that special Union which is between those Divine Persons. What it is for one being to *generate* another, and what to *proceed* from another, we are not ignorant; although the peculiar manner of the Generation of the Son of God, and the Procession of the Holy Ghost, be beyond our Capacity to conceive. And Lastly, What it is for

two Beings to be *United* together, we can very well apprehend ; although we pretend not to know the manner of That Union which is between the two Natures in the Person of Jesus Christ. From whence it plainly follows, That these Doctrines, though *above our Reason*, do yet so far stand upon equal Terms with those Doctrines which I have termed *reconcilable to Reason*, *Sect. 8.* That as our Reason may be plainly and positive convinced from its own Principles alone, of the *possibility* of the one ; so is there no Principle of our Reason which can reach so far as to prove or demonstrate any *impossibility* in the other. And where there is no Contradiction, or Impossibility, in a Doctrine, it will undeniably follow, that that same Doctrine may possibly be true. And where ever a Man is convinced of the possibility of a Doctrine, if the Truth of that same Doctrine appears to him to be testified by any Person, of whose Veracity he cannot entertain any manner of doubt, he cannot refuse to give his Assent to it ; as I have said, *Sect. 13.* Since then the Veracity of God admits of no manner of doubt, and the Holy Scrip-

tures are by both Parties in this Dispute allowed of, as most Authentick Records of the Doctrines of Faith, and Rules of Life, which God has made known, and revealed to the World. And lastly, since we here suppose, that the Doctrine of the Trinity, and that of the Incarnation of Christ, do neither of them contain, or imply, any Impossibility or Contradiction, although they are both of them above our Reason, it will follow, that if all, or any of the Texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove these Doctrines, being expounded according to the common way of interpreting all Books, (of which see *Part 1. Sect. 25.*) do fairly (and without being wrested) contain (either in themselves, or their evident Consequences) those same Doctrines which they are alledged to establish, there can be no just Cause why any Man should deny his Assent to them. But if, notwithstanding all this, it be still urged, that it is not possible for a Man explicitly to believe a thing of which he can frame no Conception or Idea ; I must refer him to the Story of the blind Man, *Sect. 14.* which seems to me abundantly to evince the contrary.

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And why we should not believe the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation, upon the Testimony of the Holy Scriptures, as well as the blind Man did the Existence of Light and Colours, upon the Testimony of other Men; joyned with that collateral Experiment which I have mentioned, I profess I can see no manner of Reason.

17. And as in my Book, *Part 3. Sect. 71.* I have advertised my Reader, that I have purposely avoided the use of certain Words and Terms, for the Reason there given: So must I desire him to take notice, that for the like Reason, I have both in my Book, and in this Appendix, omitted so much as to mention the word *Mystery*, about which, so great a Noise has of late been made. Whether this same Term *Mystery*, be always used in the New Testament, in the very same (and no other) Signification as it is understood by Heathen Authors? Or, Whether other sorts of things, by a very allowable Analogy, are not also there called *Mysteries*, upon account of their Obscurity; because *we know them but in part, and see them but as in a Glass darkly.* Or, Lastly, Whether there be
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any thing in Christianity, which may properly be called a *Mystery*, according to the genuine meaning of that Term; to me seems to be no more but a Contention *about a word*, which the Apostle expressly forbids. 2 Tim. 2. 14. But whatever may be determined concerning the propriety of the Word, the thing it self seems to me, to be very evident, that there are some Doctrines in Christianity, which are above our Reason, and yet that this is no sufficient ground for the denial of our Assent to them.

18. And if I am told, that after all this, there is no greater obscurity in any of the Doctrines of Christianity, than what there is in all natural Beings, with which we most familiarly converse; whose *real Essence* we cannot penetrate, but must content our selves with a sort of Superficial Knowledge of them, which is caused by those Impressions which they make upon our outward Organs; which, at most, can be termed but a *nominal Essence*; so that even a *spire of Grass, a Stick, a Stone*, or any other natural Being, may upon this account, as truly be termed *Mysterious*, as the most sublime Doctrines

ctrines of Religion. I shall only answer, that it mightily raises my wonder, to hear Men so freely acknowledge, that in every other thing whatsoever, there is something which is above their Reason, and to which their Understanding cannot reach ; and yet, that they will not allow the same in Religion.

19. But I know it will be objected, that the first of those three Suppositions which I have laid down, *Sect. 15.* will by no means be granted by the *Unitarians* ; for they are so far from allowing the Texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation, to be any way sufficient to that purpose ; that on the contrary, they do, with the greatest Assurance, undertake to bring other and contrary Interpretations of those very Passages, which they pretend to be far more Rational and Natural. To which I shall only Answer, that this is all that I aim at in this Appendix, that the Issue of these Controversies may be placed upon that which is the only true Foundation for it ; I mean, the Authority of the Holy Scriptures ; and that blind Men would
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not take upon them, by the strength of their Reason, to discuss Problems, and frame Conclusions concerning Light and Colours, of which they can have no true or sufficient Idea. I am very sensible that learned Men, who have their Minds strongly prepossessed with any Opinion, may, by their Criticisms, and Paraphrases, and such like Engines, torture and screw almost any Text of Scripture, till they make it look with another Aspect from what is truly its own, and seem to confess what really it never thought or meant. But if we would always take those Interpretations which flow of themselves, and not those which are violently pressed from the Scripture, (which I think is the fairest way of expounding all Speeches and Discourses whatsoever) I cannot, for my part, see how we can otherwise conclude, concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation, than as I have done, *Part 2. Sect. 22. 37.*

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